

North Carolina Cost Share Programs Review Summary
FY2021

County	<u>Chatham</u>	Date of Previous Review/Report	<u>April 2015</u>
District Staff Name(s)	<u>Kyle Watkins and Brandy Oldham</u>	Date	<u>4/19/2021 (office) and 4/20/2021 (field)</u>
NRCS Staff Name(s)	<u></u>		
Division Representative(s)	<u>Josh Vetter, Ralston James, Sydney Mucha</u>		
Additional Participants	<u></u>		

Questions	Division Findings				Division Comments	District Plan of Action Required		SWCD Plan of Action	Proposed Timeline for Implementation	Division Response to Plan of Action (date)
	Commendation	Recommendation	Corrective Action	No Concerns/ Not Applicable		Yes	No			
Section 1: Application Procedures and Tracking Progress (BMP Implementation and Payments) Questions in this section focus on how the district advertises the program, how applications are developed, how contracts are developed, how funds are tracked and how the board approves each.										
How/when are the district board meetings scheduled?				X	Scheduled the second Thursday of every month. The board receives the information packet in the mail a week before the meeting that includes the agenda and all other documents needed for a productive meeting.		X			

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How do you notify the public of the board meeting schedule? Does it adhere to the Open Meetings Law?				X	Yes, the public is notified in a way that adheres to the Open Meetings Law; The meeting announcement is posted in a local newspaper, on the county website/calendar and on the conference room door.		X			

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Please describe the district’s process for providing assistance to applicants by assessing resource concerns to determine if a BMP is “needed and feasible” and then developing the conservation plan.				X	Once a cooperator has reached out to the district, the district will perform a site visit to determine the resource concerns as well as determine if the BMP is feasible from a financial and management perspective. The district will then conduct a desktop review of the resource concern and determine if the BMP and the cooperator is eligible for cost share assistance or other programs by NRCS. At this point the district will then provide cost estimates to the landowner, describe the application and contracting process to the cooperator.		X			
Does the district provide technical assistance without cost share funds?				X	Yes, the district provides technical assistance without cost share funds.		X			
What type of technical assistance is provided without cost share funds?				X	Most of the technical assistance that is provided without cost share funding relates to Soil sampling, small land surveys and drainage issues.		X			

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How does the district prioritize which applicants get funded? Do you prioritize certain watersheds, BMPs, type of operation, first come - first served, etc?		X			A Ranking sheet for each program is used to determine funding; The scores of the ranking sheet determine if funding is received. AgWRAP has a minimum score threshold while ACSP and CCAP do not. District may wish to consider adding scoring thresholds for the other programs to ensure that only the highest ranking and priority projects receive funding.	X		No Change- the District agrees that the ranking sheet for each program already assures that the highest ranking and priority projects receive funding.	No Change	Plan of Action Accepted 5/17/2021.
Once each application is considered, what does the district do with the score? Do you fund based on the score, use another system to prioritize, create eligibility categories, or other?				X	Funding is based solely on the score of the applications for each of the cost share programs.		X			
Describe the process the district follows when there is a tie on applicants' scores.		X			Ties are broken based on when the application was received. The district may wish to consider breaking a tie by using another aspect, such as acres, water saved, nutrients managed, to ensure the most impactful applications are funded.	X		No Change- The District agrees that the ranking sheet for each program addresses these aspects, which ensures that we are funding the most impactful applications. If there was a tie, the benefits of funding each applicant would be discussed with the board to make a decision.		Plan of Action Accepted 5/17/2021.
Does the district purposefully withhold a percentage of funds until a later date in the program year to be able to fund higher quality projects (more water quality or water quantity benefits) or does the district fund applications until it runs out of funding each batching period?		X			The district does not withhold any of its funds for a second batching period. The district has its only batching period ending on Oct. 1 st . Any applications received after this point are ranked and then compared with those received during the batching period; the	X		The District has agreed to move the batching period for funding applications to August 1.	Immediate	Plan of Action Accepted 5/17/2021.

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Does the district automatically fund cooperators who applied but did not get funded in the previous program year due to lack of funds or does it re-rank them with new applications?					applications will be funded if they rank high and there are enough funds available. The district only sets threshold for scores for AgWRAP. The district would like to have all available funds tied to contracts by the winter of each fiscal year. All applications are re-ranked if they did not get funded the previous year. It is recommended the district consider having multiple batching periods and move the batching period up to ensure planting dates are not missed for some BMPs. Setting thresholds will also help ensure the best quality projects are funded.					
Are applications, contracts and requests for payments reviewed and approved by the Board as a separate action item?				X	After reviewing a selection of board meeting minutes and speaking with the district, it is clear that applications, contracts and RFPs are reviewed and approved by the board as separate action items.		X			
Are application, contracts and requests for payments motions/decisions recorded in the board minutes?				X	Yes, motion to approve and second is recorded in the meeting minutes.		X			
Has your district delegated signature authority for requests for payments to be approved outside of board meetings? How are they recorded in your board meeting minutes?				X	Yes, Lyn Mann, the board chair has delegated signature authority. If RFPs are approved outside of a board meeting, the action is presented as an information item during the next board meeting.		X			

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Applicants are limited when applying for incentive BMPs. How does your district track applicants so they do not go over the practice caps and to be sure they haven't already "adopted" the practice?				X	The district does not contract incentive BMPs often. Many cooperators in the district have adopted the BMP incentive practices such as cover crops and are not eligible to contract them currently.		X			
If multiple partners farm together, how does the district track individual applicants as one operation or entity?		X			Most cooperators farm individually, or the district knows who farms together. It is recommended that the district keep a list of known cooperators that farm together or farm multiple districts. It is also recommended that the district reach out to their surrounding districts to ensure that cooperators are adhering to cost share caps.	X		The District agrees to reach out to surrounding districts to ensure that cooperators are adhering to cost share caps. We have a list of cooperators that have used Incentive BMP's in the county. If one of these cooperators were to apply for more funds, we would call neighboring counties before proceeding.	Immediate	Plan of Action Accepted 5/17/2021.
At what point in the application process does the district develop the contract? (After Ranking, After Application Approved?) Describe this process.				X	The district develops the contract after ranking and after application approval.		X			
Describe how the district reviews the contract with the applicant. Do you explain that work cannot begin until the contract is approved by the division?	X				District staff takes time to explain the contract in detail with the cooperator. Items reviewed include all contract documents, design standards, conservation plan, deadline dates, the need for Division approval prior to starting work. District makes use of Cooperator Acknowledgement forms to help better explain the policies to the cooperator.		X			


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What procedures do you follow for notifying the applicant that work can begin?	X				When possible, the district will hand deliver the construction packet including a cover letter with important dates and information related to the contract, such as funding and expiration date. The district will also mail a letter and give the cooperators a phone call if unable to hand deliver the packet. District will also set up a pre-construction meeting with the cooperators to make sure the cooperators again understand the policies for their BMP(s).		X			
Describe the district/board's procedure for approving supervisor contracts.				X	The district does not currently have many supervisor contracts, however, when one is brought to the board the supervisor will announce the conflict of interest at the start of the meeting and will abstain from voting on his contract, which is recorded in the meeting minutes.		X			
Is it documented in the Board minutes that the supervisor abstained from discussing his/her own contract and from voting?				X	Yes, it is recorded in the meeting minutes		X			
Is each contract reviewed in detail with the board before approval? Do you project CS2?				X	Yes, each contract is reviewed in detail with the board before approval. CS2 is not projected; this is done verbally and with the assistance of board information packets.		X			



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What information do you provide the applicant?				X	The information provided in the packets includes, conservation plans, maps, funding amount, resource concerns, application score and BMP details to address the resource concern.		X			
What technical assistance do you provide during the BMP installation process to ensure the BMP is installed correctly and by the contract deadline?	X				Much technical assistance is given during the installation process. Technical staff tries to be on site during the installation process as much as possible, ensuring they are there for the start of construction and for the closeout of construction. Reminders are also given to the cooperators to keep them on track for the 1/3 install date and contract expiration.		X			
How do you track the Commission’s interim performance milestone? One-third of the work must be completed within 12 months of division approval. Are you using CS2?	X				The district staff use CS2 to track this milestone. They also have a backup spreadsheet but rely on CS2 report.		X			
If 1/3 of the work has not been completed within 12 months and the cooperator requests additional time, is the district recording 6-month extensions in the board minutes?				X	Yes, this is recorded in the board meeting minutes, though it does not happen very much.		X			



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What documentation do you include in the contract file that certifies that the BMP was inspected and is installed to the standards?				X	Documentation included in the contract files include: As-builts, design sheets, check out sheets, receipts, pictures of before and after installation of the resource concern, and division approval emails.		X			
Are BMPs measured then certified before the request for payment is approved? How is this documented?				X	Yes, all BMPs are measured before they are certified and the RFP is processed; The district site checks all installed BMPs and makes notes on the original 11 form if any measurements have been updated.		X			
Section 2: Spot Checks and Compliance Issues Questions in this section focus on how the district reviews BMPs for compliance and how maintenance and/or non-compliance issues are addressed.										
Are all BMPs under the waste management category spot checked for the first five years after installation? This applies to all farms that fall under the thresholds that are regulated by DWR.				X	Yes, all waste management BMPs are spot checked annual for the first 5 years. Supervisor contracts are spot checked by NRCS.		X			
How does the district notify the NRCS area office or division to conduct spot checks for contracts that need to be spot checked by someone outside of the district? (Refer to Spot Check Policy)				X	The district communicates with NRCS via email to schedule spot checks for Supervisors. District will provide information needed for the spot check to NRCS and checks are completed quickly thanks to a good working relationship with NRCS.		X			



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How does your district notify individuals that have BMPs that are out of compliance or need maintenance? (Refer to Non-Compliance Policy)				X	The district will call and write a letter to notify the cooperator of the issue. A copy of the letter is kept in the contract file and the cooperator is given 30 days to come back into compliance.		X			
How are supervisors notified of BMPs that are out of compliance or need maintenance at any time throughout the year?				X	Supervisors are notified in the next meeting of any compliance or maintenance issues. If supervisor contracts are found out of compliance the same notification process is followed as set by the Division.		X			
Does the district provide a written notice that the BMP must be repaired or re-implemented within 30 working days? (Vegetative practices have to be reestablished within one calendar year.) Is a copy of the notification kept in the contract file?				X	Yes, a written notice would be provided, and the copy would be kept in the contract file. To-date there have only been maintenance issues.		X			
If the BMP was not repaired or re-implemented, was repayment requested? Please provide documentation: contract numbers and/or names.				X	This has not happened recently. If it does, the process laid out by the Division would be followed.		X			
Is the district notifying the division of non-compliance and resolutions?				X	Yes, the district would notify the division if a non-compliance issue arose as well as the resolution. Recently, there have only been maintenance issues so far, which are addressed quickly by the cooperator.		X			





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Section 3: Record Keeping Questions in this section focus on how funds are managed and accounted for, maintaining proper design and job approval authority, as well as disclosure forms.										
Do you use the CS2 reports to show the board available program funds, encumbrances and expenditures?				X	Yes, the BMP audit report in CS2 is used to show the board these funds. The district does this every meeting to keep the board informed of available funds.		X			
How are technical assistance and operating funds tracked? Are they audited? What is the date of the last audit? Who performed the audit?				X	The county performs the audit with the rest of the county offices. The last one was completed in June of 2020 and the 2021 audit is scheduled for May of this year.		X			
Who in the office does work for Cost Share Programs?				X	Kyle Watkins and Susannah Goldston		X			
Is proper job approval authority (JAA) documented for each technical and cost share position? Please provide a copy of the latest approved JAA. (Print a copy of what is in the data base. Does it match the district's version?)				X	Yes, proper JAA is documented for each technical and cost share position. Kyle is still working towards some of the commonly contracted BMPs and plans to submit for JAA through the Commission in late summer or early fall.		X			

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Section 4: Contract Reviews and Site Visits Below is a list of the contracts the division reviewed. Spot checks were also conducted. Notes include recommendations and/or corrective action for contract files as well as the BMP. Contracts/BMPs are listed by contract number.										
Contract Number: 19-2017-801 Applicant Name: Travis Frye BMP: Agricultural Water Supply Pond 				X	Water supply pond is well maintained with regular mowing of spillways apparent.		X			

<div>Contract Number: 19-2015-502</div> <div>Applicant Name: Town of Pittsboro</div> <div>BMP: Critical Area Planting</div> <div></div>		X			<div>Critical area planting shows some bare ground associated with the contract area. This lack of vegetation could lead to erosion, therefore it is recommended that additional vegetation (shade tolerant, if possible) be established in these bare areas. It is likely that the tree crowns have contributed to bare areas.</div>	X		<div>The District agrees to contact the Town of Pittsboro and assist them with re-establishing the vegetation. Planting dates for critical area planting are late August- mid September.</div>	<div>Will contact the city immediately to establish vegetation by the fall.</div>	<div>Plan of Action accepted on 5/17/2021. Please keep Division Staff up to date on progress.</div>
<div>Contract Number: 19-2015-011</div> <div>Applicant Name: Jesse Mann</div> <div>BMP: Grassed Waterway</div> <div></div>				X	<div>Grassed waterways are in working order with a great stand of dense vegetation.</div>		X			

<p>Contract Number: 19-2019-205 & 19-2020-203 (Supplement) Applicant Name: Jesse Mann BMP: Non-Field Farm Road Repair</p> <div></div>		X			<p>The road is in great shape and functioning properly, however, sections of the road shoulder do not have sufficient vegetation growing on them. It is recommended that vegetation be re-established on these areas to ensure that erosion of the road does not occur.</p>	X		<p>The District agrees to contact Jesse Mann and assist him with re-establishing the vegetation. Planting dates for critical area planting are late August- mid September.</p>	<p>Will contact the cooperator immediately to establish vegetation by the fall.</p>	<p>Plan of Action accepted on 5/17/2021. Please keep Division Staff up to date on progress.</p>
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<div>Contract Number: 19-2018-005</div> <div>Applicant Name: Jesse Mann</div> <div>BMP: Stripcropping</div> <div></div>				X	The strip cropping layout was apparent and seems to be working as intended. No sedimentation or gullyng was observed in the field.		X			
<div>Contract Number: 19-2018-801</div> <div>Applicant Name: Meredith Leight</div> <div>BMP: Water Supply Well</div> <div></div>				X	Water supply well has adequate cover and is hooked to crop irrigation system.		X			

<p>Contract Number: 19-2012-010 Applicant Name: William Lail BMP: Livestock Exclusion Fencing, HUA, Water Supply Well, Tanks, Stream Crossing</p> <div></div>		X			<p>Water supply well has adequate cover and livestock (sheep and donkey) are excluded. Tanks, fencing and HUA are functioning properly and have held up well during the life span of the contract. The stream crossing is in need of maintenance. Due to heavy rainfall, a rut has formed from farm vehicles crossing the stream; gravel should be replaced in this area to prevent any sedimentation and erosion of the streambank.</p>	X		<p>The District agrees to contact the William Lail and assist him with maintenance of the stream crossing. Asking to add more gravel.</p>	<p>Immediately</p>	<p>Plan of Action accepted on 5/17/2021. Please keep Division Staff up to date on progress.</p>
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